

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 23 and continuing on to page 7 with the following amended paragraph:

Whey proteins have high nutritive value for humans, and can provide a favorable sensory quality, conferring a creamy and spreadable quality to ~~diary~~ dairy products in which they are incorporated. Whey proteins also can enhance cheesecake baking performance, when added to a cream cheese product, especially in cheesecake formulations with low protein content. In addition, their cost is low, compared to the other proteins present in milk, making it desirable to incorporate whey proteins into cheese products. The present method overcomes the difficulties previously encountered in dairy production in which attempts to incorporate whey proteins into cheese, such as cream cheese products, have led to excessive separation losses (syneresis) and concomitant decreases in yield and/or to very poor firmness of the finished product.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 10, line 8, with the following amended paragraph:

A mixture of the product comprising the polymerized whey protein (oftentimes characterized as a suspension, although it may also be deemed an emulsion or solution; these terms are used interchangeably in the present specification) from the WPC concentrate along with a selected amount of edible fat, such as milkfat (preferably anhydrous milk fat), and water are mixed to form an essentially homogeneous mixture or slurry. A selected source of edible fat includes ~~diary~~ dairy fat, natural and partially hydrogenated edible oil, and the like as well as mixtures thereof. ~~Non-diary~~ Non-dairy fats, such as vegetable, animal fats or oils, which can be hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated, may also be used. By present preference, a ~~diary~~ dairy fat is the fat source used. Illustrative dairy fat sources include, but are not limited to, anhydrous milk fat (AMF), concentrated milk fat (CMF), cream, and the like. It is possible to include other fat-containing dairy materials, such as dry cream, along with or as the fat source.

The specific fat source used will also play a role in determining the characteristics flavors and aromas in the resulting cream cheese product. Preferably, the cheese products of this invention include only proteins derived from polymerized whey protein and milkfat. As those skilled in art know, the milk or dairy dairy product composition may be varied, for example, by using fat from one or more milk sources, including no-fat or skim milk, low-fat milk, full-fat or whole milk, whole milk with added fat, and the like. The milk or dairy dairy product composition may also be varied, for example, by inclusion of additional dairy components such as milk solids, cream, and the like.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 10, line 31 and continuing on to page 11 with the following amended paragraph:

In this fat-containing mixture, the concentration of the polymerized whey protein from the WPC can be in a range of about 3 to about 8 percent, preferably about 4 to about 6 percent, based on the weight of the mixture. This fat-containing mixture is heated to a temperature in the range of about 55 to about 75°C, preferably about 60 to about 65°C. The heated fat-containing mixture is homogenized. Homogenization may be at a pressure up to about 14,500 psi, generally from about 1,500 to about 14,500 psi. Preferably the homogenization pressure is about 1,500 to about 10,000 psi, and more preferably about 3,000 to about 5,000 psi. The homogenization can be, and preferably is, conducted concurrently with the heating. The use of heating during homogenization is helpful in maintaining the milk fat in a liquid treatment, thereby increasing the efficiency of the homogenization step. In most cases, only a single pass through the homogenizer, especially when used with heating, is required. Homogenization reduces the average particle size in the mixture (oil/water); generally the average particle size is less than about 2.5 μm , and preferably less than about 1.5 μm . Suitable homogenizers that can be employed for this purpose are well-known in the fields of dairy dairy science and food chemistry.